

Semi-annual Report
SAMARA, RUSSIA: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROGRAM
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 118-A-00-99-00059-00
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I. SUMMARY

In November 1999, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) established a small office in Samara, Russia to promote citizen participation in regional and local decision-making through partnerships with local governments and civic organizations. In so doing, NDI has sought to promote and sustain citizen involvement in as many aspects of political, economic and community development as possible, and to create a more fertile and transparent environment for future democratic and market reforms.

Barry Reed, NDI/Samara field representative, arrived in Samara in early November 1999. Through his initiatives, civic activists joined the region's leading businessmen in special task forces to evaluate tourism prospects for the cities of Samara and Togliatti. Separate sets of recommendations to improve the tourism industry were also developed for Samara's governor, the mayors of Samara and Togliatti, the media and other interested parties. In addition, NDI/Samara worked with the Samara oblast administration to integrate a citizen participation component into the budget process. NDI also began activities to promote citizen participation around the establishment of an industrial park in Samara.

II. BACKGROUND

The National Democratic Institute has worked in Russia since 1991, and has operated an office in Moscow since 1992. From 1993 until the opening of the Samara office, NDI/Moscow conducted more than 18 programs aimed at strengthening democratic institutions in the Samara oblast.

USAID's Regional Investment Initiative (now RI) in Samara opened new opportunities for NDI to build on previous relationships by opening an office in Samara and conducting more sustained programming in the oblast. Citizens everywhere should have a voice in economic development projects that affect their lives. Such involvement increases the transparency of projects and helps to deter corruption.

During November and December 1999, NDI trainer Barry Reed set up an office and conducted an assessment of the status of citizen participation in Samara. Through meetings with oblast and municipal officials, civic organizations, international and local businesses, analysts, and representatives of USAID, Mr. Reed identified a number of opportunities for injecting greater citizen involvement into government decision-making. In early 2000, NDI focused on facilitating as its core project the organization of a tourism development task force in the city of Samara. Later, NDI was invited to participate in a tourism development project that was already underway in Togliatti, a smaller city in the Samara oblast. Other proposed and ongoing activities include establishing advisory committees to oblast departments, introducing transparency measures to oblast budgeting procedures, establishing a citizens' committee to study the

feasibility and development of an industrial park, and providing training on citizen participation mechanisms to students at the Samara Municipal Management Institute.

Objectives

NDI's goals in Samara are to promote citizen participation in decision-making, foster economic, political and community-based linkages, and create and maintain a stable environment for democratic and economic development. The Institute established the following objectives for its citizen participation project:

- \$ strengthen democratic institutions and procedures;
- \$ create grass-roots links between government, business and community-based organizations;
- \$ establish sustainable citizens' task forces, focused on specific issues, that would provide for citizen participation in local decision-making;
- \$ enable local government officials, business leaders, and citizens' task forces to conduct public hearings on specific issues; and
- \$ improve the climate for economic growth and political reform in the Samara region.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

In the past six months, NDI/Samara has continued several projects that began in early 2000 and launched a few new programs.

- \$ **Tourism Development in Samara.** In cooperation with the Samara Chamber of Commerce and oblast administration, NDI has facilitated the establishment of a task force to evaluate prospects for increasing tourism in Samara. The committee was established in early spring 2000 and incorporates a cross-section of the community, including 30 ordinary citizens and representatives of government (the oblast department of health care, the city administration, the oblast department of sanatoriums and natural resources, the oblast economy department, and the Samara city international affairs department), NGOs (Volga-II, Samara Eco Security, Gera Handicrafts, the artists' union "Politra," and Povolzhje) and businesses (Samara international airport, the Volga hotel, the National hotel, the Russia hotel, the Zarechie hotel, the Under Sail restaurant, Coca-Cola, and Pepsi-Cola). Under Barry Reed's leadership, the group met six times (the last Wednesday of every month from April through September). At and between these meetings, the task force conducted an examination of the state of tourism, considered the city's strengths and weaknesses, and selected key issue areas on which to focus (information, natural features, activities and attractions, and services). After selecting the issues, task force members reviewed each subject, heard expert testimony, and then discussed possible recommendations. A draft of recommendations on services was developed, and NDI's Barry Reed agreed to compile these recommendations into a final report. Occasionally, local experts have been invited to address the task force on specific topics. At the end of April, while discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the service

sector in Samara, members of the task force requested that representatives from the city administration address the issues of hotel standards, tour agency operations and requirements for foreign tourists to travel to Samara. City officials as well as the hotel industry representatives spoke on the subject at the next meeting at the end of May. The following recommendations for service industries in Samara will be included in the final report:

- each hotel and tour operator should have public transportation maps available for guests;
- an appropriate city agency should post scheme maps at each bus, tram, and trolleybus stop;
- different types of tours (on foot, by boat, by car and/or public transportation), concentrating on history, nature, culture, shopping, etc., should be developed and advertised; and
- a competition among businesses of Samara should be held to determine how more businesses could contribute to increasing tourism in the area. Some businesses will sponsor prizes for competition. Those businesses recognized as winners will be advertised on tours' routes.

On September 14, Donovan Rypkema, principal of the Real Estate Services Group in Washington, D.C. and an expert on marketing and communications, conducted a workshop on marketing and development issues in Samara. Donating his time to this project,

Mr. Rypkema instructed the task force members on the general principles and practical details of developing a marketing plan for increasing tourism. Mr. Rypkema encouraged lively discussions and brainstorming between government officials, business and civil leaders during the all-day meeting. As a result of these discussions, the group decided to prepare a specific strategy for marketing tourism in their city. NDI will continue to work with the task force, the Chamber of Commerce and the relevant government offices on implementation of the plan. The task force intends to complete the tourism development plan for Samara by the end of October 2000. They will present the report to Samara's governor, mayor, and the media, and distribute it widely to citizens, businesses and other interested parties.

\$ **Tourism Development in Togliatti.** Togliatti, the second largest city in the Samara oblast, recently became the second city in Russia to adopt a five-year mission statement for guiding local decision makers on city development. Increasing tourism activities and attracting more visitors to the city is a prominent goal in the city's mission statement. After visiting the Samara tourism task force meeting organized by NDI at the end of spring, the Togliatti Chamber of Commerce together with the City administration asked NDI to facilitate a strategic planning process targeted at improving their tourism climate. The Togliatti task force has strong leadership and consists of eager members from government, businesses and NGOs who, before NDI's involvement with the project, spent a considerable amount of time working together on tourism prospects for their city.

With the help of U.S. marketing and communications expert Don Rypkema, NDI facilitated a two-day meeting that allowed the Togliatti group to develop a plan of action for the next five years. Shortly after the meeting, NDI's Barry Reed helped the committee draft a tourism development plan (a draft is attached to this report) which will be presented to the mayor, City Duma members, oblast administration and widely distributed among the media, citizens and other interested groups later this year. Starting with a recommendation to create a permanent citizen-based tourism advisory committee (similar to the one that developed the recommendations in the attached document), the authors of the report make a case for better maintenance and overall cleanliness in the city. They urge the local government to influence and improve customer service for both local and foreign tourists. Some of the major suggestions focus on improving public and involving private transportation, developing an effective marketing plan and providing information. Each recommendation is matched with an approximate budget figure and possible implementers.

Cooperation with the local government has been outstanding throughout this project, and the City Duma now awaits the final tourism development plan from the task force in order to include the recommendations in next year's budget. Yulia Rybakova, a task force representative from the city administration, recently approached NDI/Samara with several ideas on how to distribute the final report in the community, thus making everybody aware of what to expect and whom to hold accountable.

- **Oblast Budget Transparency.** During a November 1999 visit to NDI in Washington, Samara Governor Konstantin Titov expressed interest in increasing the transparency of all government operations, particularly the oblast budget. In early spring 2000, NDI submitted a proposal to the administration to integrate transparency features into the budgeting process. Only at the end of summer did the finance department respond to the Institute's proposal. Although no concrete information requested by NDI was supplied, the finance department guaranteed cooperation in the near future. As soon as NDI receives all the necessary information, the Institute will proceed with setting up public hearings, establishing focus groups and organizing citizen budget advisory committees in order to integrate citizen participation into the budgeting process. As a result of NDI's efforts, the oblast recently updated the budget information on its website. Previously, only 1997 fiscal year budget was posted on <http://www.adm.samara.ru/econom/budget.asp>.

Once a new budget is approved by the regional legislature, NDI plans to encourage the oblast administration to work with citizens' committees on distributing the document widely to inform the public about the budget's contents.

- \$ **Training Programs.** As a complementary component to the budget transparency program and because of Samara Governor Titov's request, NDI trained 27 students (current and future city administrators) of the Samara Municipal Management Institute during the spring 2000 semester. In addition to leading discussions on budgeting and

finance, service delivery, performance measurement, and transparency, NDI's Barry Reed provided students with a general overview of where and how local government fits in the structure of the American federal system. Integrating democracy and its teaching into the classroom, NDI's local government expert encouraged the future city administrators to embrace citizens' input in their own decision-making.

- **Student Citizen Participation.** In response to requests to work with youth, Barry Reed agreed in February 2000 to begin teaching a class on government and democracy to a group of high school students at Samara School 11. For two hours each week of the spring 2000 semester, 20 17-year-olds as well as their social science teachers and school administrators focused on issues related to governance and citizen participation in their own country, and compared their system to other developed democracies. In addition to the theoretical class work, NDI assisted students in the creation of a student government association for the school and an advisory board composed of students, teachers, parents and administrators. By the end of May 2000, the students had drafted a constitution, and later in the fall plan to inaugurate the student government they created on paper. As a continuation of this program, the Development through Education Fund recently requested NDI's assistance in expanding the discussion of democratization in secondary schools to school administrators and parents.

§ **Industrial Park.** Following up on an initiative started by the CARANA Corporation under the Regional Initiative, in the beginning of 2000, NDI expressed an interest in helping Samara establish an industrial park, a concept endorsed by many foreign investors in Samara. NDI/Samara wanted to include in the plan those procedures that would allow citizens from the area chosen for the industrial park to receive information and then comment on the park's development. NDI also proposed to integrate citizens into the management of the industrial park by forming an advisory committee that would better coordinate citizens' participation in this process. The Institute sent an initial information request in February, and only recently received an agreement from the oblast administration to cooperate on the industrial park development project. NDI is ready to provide its assistance in integrating citizens in the decision-making process of this project.

IV. EVALUATION

Although it is early yet to assess the full impact of NDI's activities in late 1999 and in 2000, the Institute has made real progress in reaching its objectives. With NDI's assistance, two citizen task forces focused on tourism development in the region were established in the cities of Samara and Togliatti. These task forces have strengthened linkages between government, business and community organizations. The representatives of the administration of both cities now consider public opinion in their decision-making. The process of establishing and sustaining the task forces has its own benefits. The task force members are developing leadership skills. They now recognize the need for action by individuals, citizens' groups and business representatives in order

to achieve economic growth and political reform in the region. Task force members representing city administrations have realized that it is in their own interests to seek input and support from the private sector as they pursue economic development.

NDI will continue to monitor the implementation of the Samara and Togliatti tourism recommendations. For example, the Samara Chamber of Commerce has already started formulating criteria for choosing a hotel of the year. NDI will report on these developments as they arise.

V. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

In 2001, depending on funding, NDI/Samara proposes pursuing several new projects, in addition to continuing those activities that are already underway. Each of the proposed projects would require cooperation from city officials, so not all of them are likely to come to fruition.

- **Oblast Administration Advisory Committees.** In the beginning of 2000, NDI proposed creating a system of advisory committees for two to three departments of the oblast administration. Initially, the oblast administration rejected this concept, but recently Governor Titov expressed new interest in the idea. NDI envisions that the committees, composed of Samara citizens and NGOs, business and industry representatives, would meet with department heads and staff on a quarterly basis. NDI will seek to establish at least a few of the several proposed advisory committees as influential mechanisms in oblast decision-making before the end of the year. The Institute also plans to approach other cities of Samara oblast with the same concept.
- **Budget Transparency Follow-Up.** If the current project yields desirable results, NDI would like to extend the idea of citizen participation in budget planning, monitoring and transparency to other interested municipalities of the Samara oblast.
- **Samara City Charter and Transparency.** NDI/Samara plans to work with a small group of deputies from the Samara City Duma on developing a new city charter. Based on the principles of reform and transparency, the new charter will include a draft legislation that will define openness in government procedures. This project could also serve as a model for other cities throughout the Samara oblast and Russia.
- **TOC Effectiveness.** In cooperation with the oblast administration, NDI would like to work with one or several territorial councils of self-government (TOC) in the city of Samara in attempt to increase their effectiveness, particularly as it relates to citizen participation and government access. This exercise could help the oblast reform its local government structure and serve as a model for other Russian regions.
- **Samara City Administration Project.** NDI would like to work with the city administration and incorporate citizen participation into several special projects that presently are under the

administration's control. The creation of planning commissions and public hearings on land use and development could become the first step to greater citizen participation in this area.

- **Small Towns Association.** To address the problems of small towns in the region, NDI would like to encourage development of an association of smaller towns. Citizens and elected officials of small administrative units of the Samara oblast will meet on a quarterly basis to discuss and find solutions to their common problems.
- **Togliatti Land Use and Development Plan.** One expected result of the Togliatti Tourism project will be an initiative to develop and protect the waterfront and adjacent forest property in Togliatti. This initiative would be an excellent vehicle for citizen participation.

IV. PERSONNEL

NDI/Samara's programs in this period were conducted by Barry Reed. Roman Levchenko provided interpreting, administrative and logistical support. Suzanne Reed donated considerable time and expertise to various programs.